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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE PRE-ELECTION CLIMATE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Pre-Election Climate in the Dominican Republic

1. With the resolution of the protracted crisis over command-level changes in the military, a relative calm has been established. Garcia Godoy has moved publicly to repair his relations with the military, and the new minister of defense, General Perez, has sacked one officer for partisan political activity. The country's basic social and political problems remain unsolved, however, and a new period of turbulence seems certain to accompany preparations for the elections.

The Campaign Gets Under Way

2. The provisional government, through its recent public actions, has begun to lay the groundwork for choosing a new four-year administration on 1 June. Arrangements are under way to register voters, and the number of pro-Bosch civil servants is being reduced to alter the partisan character of provincial and local governments.

3. Any number of fortuitous developments, however, could jeopardize the elections. Deep political passions could easily magnify small incidents between the left and the security services into major confrontations. The assassination of leading political figures is an ever-present possibility. The rebel military are a thorn in the flesh to the regular military. The return of Caamano or a graceless exploitation of the anniversary of the outbreak of revolution on 24 April could easily trigger violence. The general lawlessness characteristic of Dominican society has become a graver problem since the revolution. The disruption of public order is particularly serious

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now because of the widespread availability of arms and the lack of effective law enforcement. Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF) troops might have to be drawn in to maintain order in Santo Domingo during the campaign.

4. Bosch and his followers have charged that a systematic campaign of intimidation has been directed at them by the military and civilian rightwingers, and that "hundreds" of members of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) have been killed. Although the PRD really has cause for concern, these charges are greatly exaggerated. The sporadic acts of terrorism that have occurred against PRD members appear to be the work of a small number of right-wing extremists operating independently of each other.

5. Extreme leftists may also try to prevent the elections. Some already have threatened to do so, but most of them seem to be waiting for Bosch's decision on his candidacy--probably expecting to lend him covert support if he runs.

6. At the present time, it appears that the President is intent on going through with the elections and leaving office on 30 June. It is possible that he may change his mind if he decides that conditions for an orderly transfer of power do not exist or that the elections will result in increased bitterness and hostility. Before taking office he felt a two-year term would be desirable, and during recent weeks he has mused about extending the life of the provisional regime. Although Garcia Godoy has thought about the possibility of standing as a compromise candidate, he is probably discouraged by the legal and political obstacles that would have to be overcome. The Institutional Act itself rules out the candidacy of anyone serving in the provisional government. His recent references to the desirability of having a candidate who would not arouse antagonisms and could continue the provisional government's work of reconciliation may stem from some behind-the-scenes activity that could eventuate in the formation of a new political movement, possibly involving the "Santiago group" of businessmen.

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7. Free balloting has not been the traditional method of apportioning political power in the Dominican Republic. Indeed, the elections of 1962 constituted the first truly free referendum in the history of the country. When the Inter-American Peace Force leaves, the Dominican military will once again become the final arbiters of political life. Despite the tumult over command changes under the provisional regime, no basic changes have been effected. The military still considers themselves an elite group not entirely responsible to civil authority.

The Candidates

8. Joaquin Balaguer has been the one predictable element in the Dominican political spectrum. The Reformist Party (PR) leader consistently has urged holding elections on 1 June--chiefly because he is confident of winning. His party began preparing for the campaign almost immediately after his return to the Dominican Republic last June.

9. Balaguer, who held the presidency for a brief span immediately before and after the death of Trujillo, has stressed that he is the candidate of moderation and order. At the same time he has advocated a program of moderate reform--a platform designed to catch the vote of the conservative rural population.

10. However, the mercurial Bosch remains the key to the development of the campaign, and possibly to the future stability of the Dominican Republic. So far, he has refused to commit himself on his candidacy--on the grounds that terrorism and violence preclude valid elections and that in any case the military will not respect their outcome. He has left himself considerable room to maneuver, and his final decision may be a month or so away. In the meantime, his PRD is preparing for the campaign. Bosch probably is attempting to judge whether he can win and take office if he does win. At the present time he would seem to be leaning to the conclusion that this is unlikely.

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11. Bosch's penchant for doing the unpredictable and keeping those closest to him in the dark about his real intentions makes it difficult to forecast his actions. His plans are further obscured by an almost paranoid concern with personal security that has caused him to shut himself off from normal Dominican life.

12. There are likely to be strong pressures on Bosch to avoid having the PRD sit out the election. Many of the party's politicians think their electoral chances are good and do not relish the prospect of a four-year patronage drought. If Bosch does stay on the sidelines, there is a strong possibility that he will lose his influence over the "constitutionalist" movement to someone like Caamano.

13. Instead of boycotting the elections, Bosch may be seeking to delay the balloting until a more propitious time. Of late, he has hinted that elections should be postponed, and that he would welcome an IAPF pledge to assure his security or a US guarantee to protect his regime in office. He has also proposed that he, Bonnelly, and Balaguer agree on a new provisional president to rule for one year.

14. The several minor candidates and movements that have emerged complicate the electoral picture, but have not really cut into the strengths of Bosch and Balaguer. The most significant of these groups has been Rafael Bonnelly's "third force"--a coalition of minor parties. Bonnelly, president of the Council of State that ruled during 1962, is generally regarded as a conservative and an example of "thwarted ambition," according to the embassy. He may be more interested in using his candidacy to obtain patronage from Balaguer than in actually running for office.

15. On the left, the increasingly militant Revolutionary Social Christian Party (PRSC) has split with the PRD over strategy and tactics, but there is a good chance it will support Bosch in return for political favors. Hector Aristy feels that his nascent organization, the 24th of April Movement, should support Bosch now in return for patronage which will build up the party for the future. Aristy is counting on Caamano to return and give a boost to the 24th of April Movement, possibly by running for the vice presidency

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on the PRD ticket. The PRSC and 24th of April Movement will become more significant if Bosch does decide to boycott the race, since either one could hoist the banner of "constitutionalism" against Balaguer. Without Bosch, however, a Balaguer victory would seem a foregone conclusion.

16. A Bosch-Balaguer contest in which Bosch employed his undisputed talents as a campaigner could go either way. Although Balaguer is thought to have the edge now, Bosch has several potential advantages. Among these are his skill as a campaigner, his appeal to the country's urban have-nots and youth, his control of an important segment of the country's public administration--including the vital sugar corporation--and his acceptability to important labor unions.

The Post-Election Period

17. The fiercer the competition, the greater the likelihood that the winner will be accepted as the country's legitimate leader. If Bosch does not run and no suitable substitute figure, such as Caamano, emerges, Balaguer will be vulnerable to the charge that he is a puppet, imposed on the country and not deserving of allegiance. In such a contingency, the Communists and associated extreme leftists will find willing allies among the non-Communist left.

18. If Bosch or a candidate of the left is elected, a military coup is likely to occur in short order. Its timing would be more dependent on the disposition of the Inter-American Peace Force and the OAS mission, which have been the real sources of stability for the last seven months, than on the actions of a leftist regime itself. Balaguer would be much better able than Bosch to get along with the military, but even the moderate reforms he advocates probably would cause some dissatisfaction.

19. In addition to the military, the elected regime will face a host of other problems--such as widespread unemployment, extreme poverty, low sugar prices and high production costs, an imbalance in international payments, and increasing inflationary pressures.

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